



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH GOVERNMENT?

BY ALLEYNE IRELAND

---

## I.

WHO is satisfied—I will not say well satisfied, but satisfied at all—with the present state of government?

Are the agricultural interests satisfied with it? Are the industrial interests? Is skilled labor satisfied with it? Is capital? Are those whose social contribution is intelligence satisfied with it? Are those whose contribution is muscle? Is the individual considered as a producer satisfied with it? Is the individual considered as a consumer? Are those who bear the burden of an oppressive taxation satisfied with it? Are those upon whom the proceeds of this taxation are lavished?

It is not too much to say that the only people in the self-governing portions of the world who are today satisfied with the state of government are those who from the incompetence and corruption of government secure the opportunity to amass power and wealth at the expense of the general welfare, and those who regard these qualities in it as the most effective arguments in favor of revolution.

It is surely one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of the human race that a science which for more than twenty centuries has engaged the attention of the most profound and capacious minds, which has enlisted the sympathetic interest of the noblest characters, which has for its material an experimental record so vast that the material of all other sciences is insignificant by comparison, should have yielded results so unsatisfactory that there is scarcely a government in the world which is not at this moment threatened with radical change of form and method, if not with actual destruction, at the hands of an exasperated populace.

That our present state should be what it is after nine-

teen centuries of Christian teaching, after a hundred years of industrial development, after several generations of popular education, must afford to all intelligent and informed minds food for the most disturbing reflection, and cause for the gravest alarm.

The most significant element in the situation is not that which derives its interest from the portrayal of the confusion into which government has fallen, of the exasperation which pervades the mental attitude of all classes, of the physical distress which is, as it always has been, the real foundation of popular discontent. What endows the position with its most serious perils is that what we observe around us today is the net product of all the extravagant promises of human betterment trumpeted to the world for more than a century by the hierarchs of religion, of politics, of education, of industrialism, and of philanthropy.

Religion was to make people good, education was to make them wise, politics was to make them free, industrialism was to make them rich, and philanthropy was to take care of the exceptions which prove the rule. Now, everybody knows that the majority of people are neither good, nor wise, nor free, nor rich; but what is much less generally known is that, if these adjectives are employed with a strict regard for their true meaning, the majority of people are neither better, wiser, freer, nor richer than their ancestors were two thousand years ago.

Are they better in the sense that they are less under the dominion of greed, lust, envy and malice? Are they wiser in the sense that the progress of knowledge has made them more amenable to the appeal of reason, and less to the appeal of the emotions? Are they freer in the sense that the pressure exerted upon them by the elusive forces of modern industrial and social conditions is less galling to them than was that of the more tangible slavery of ancient times to their forbears? Are they richer in the sense that with a thousand conveniences at their service which formerly the wealth of a Croesus could not command, they have narrowed the gulf which separates desire from attainment, or in the sense that their tenure of decent existence from day to day is endowed with that security which is the most important factor in happiness?

In some respects, indeed, man is now more fortunate than he has been in any other age. For the extremity of

his physical suffering the chemist has provided anodynes; for the satisfaction of his mind the printing-press has opened the boundless field of letters; for his entertainment the ingenuity of inventors has placed at his disposal every sound which charms the ear, and every sight which charms the eye; to his comfort and luxury the remotest regions of the globe despatch their contribution; his days have been lengthened by the physician and by the surgeon; the obstacles which, for countless centuries, time and space interposed between man and man have been swept aside by the engineer; and the air, the sea, and the land have become the highways of an ever-broadening human intercourse.

That these advantages are widespread over the world, that they are enjoyed by the rich and by the poor, some of them, even, by the destitute, has led to the popular acceptance of an utterly erroneous belief that the nature of man has, in modern times, experienced a general and rapid elevation, that alike in character and in ability his progress has been such as to discredit all argument based upon human history, and to justify a serene confidence in an imminent millennium.

If any one cause, more than another, has contributed to the present appalling condition of the world, if there is one which has done more than any other to withhold from the use of mankind that nourishing harvest which observation fertilises in the soil of experience, it is that blind optimism which discounts every disagreeable fact, as having no more than a casual and transitory significance, and accepts every agreeable fact as the expression of an irresistible force for good.

The arguments of the optimists have been advanced with warmth, with ingenuity, with persistence; and as their general quality is such that they reassure the ignorant, console the mediocre, flatter the vain, and bewilder the stupid, they have rallied to their standard a vast army of genial adherents. So great is the proportion of humanity which has fallen under their spell that the almost imperceptible minority which prefers any truth, however painful, to any falsehood, however gratifying, is branded as materialistic, cynical, and reactionary.

The fact is that so far as human beings are thinkers they fall into two distinct groups—the rhapsodists and the realists. The former turn their eager faces toward the

future, and encourage their hopes to paint upon the unwoven canvas of tomorrow the rich landscape of their desire; the latter scrutinize the unalterable engraving of yesterday, in the confident assurance that upon that chart alone can a true course be laid for human advancement.

It is from the standpoint of the realist that the present paper is written.

In the ship of state the place for idealism is not in the sails, from which the vessel secures its movement, but at the helm which guides it towards its destination.

Since "The Ship of State" is an accepted figure for Government, the analogy may be extended. The captain of a ship must always keep in mind the port for which he is sailing; but the mate must always trim his yards and reef or loose his sails with reference to the actual conditions of the weather. If the captain should leave port with no particular destination in view, if he should insist upon sailing toward any point for which the wind was favorable from day to day, he could always make a sailing record, but he could never reach a harbor, except by some unexpected stroke of luck; and if he did reach a harbor he might find that his cargo was wholly unsuited to the needs of the country.

If the mate, in face of a rapidly falling barometer and a ragged wall of livid cloud to windward, should keep full sail on his ship, because the sea was now calm, and had been calm last week, and because he hoped it would be calm next week, the ship would soon be drifting about, a dismasted hulk.

Let us make another supposition. Before the ship leaves port the captain calls all hands aft, and addresses them thus: "We are assembled aboard this ship in pursuit of the common purpose which is defined in our charter. As our united effort is to be devoted to the accomplishment of the task which we have voluntarily assumed it is impossible for me to believe that any one of us can harbor a thought inimical to the achievement of our aim. Our united success will gratify the feelings and advance the true interest of each of us; and the consequences of failure would fall heavily upon one as upon another. It is clear, then, that if I should fail to give each of you an equal share in the management of this enterprise I should exhibit a distrust of your honesty of intention or of your ability in action. Such distrust, I

need hardly remind you, would create aboard our vessel a condition of discord which could have no other outcome than to betray the hopes which unite us in our undertaking.

"May I not assure you, therefore, that your full, equal, and enthusiastic coöperation in our plan is, in my view, the most important element in the situation. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that I should regard failure, with your coöperation, as a result far more pregnant of promise to humanity than success without it. I must beg you to believe that in saying this I am at once moved by the deepest emotion and sustained by the most profound conviction; and I make this appeal to you with high confidence, because the thought would be unendurable to me that there was not ever-present in your minds, as it is ever-present in mine, the inspiring belief that history will esteem our actions for the humane qualities with which we endow them, rather than measure them by the base standard of material achievement. As the poet has so well said:

Oh, better far, to fail, if pure your heart,  
Than reach success by using wisdom's chart.

"The most satisfactory method by which our unity of thought, our comradeship of action, could be established and preserved, by which we could assure to ourselves that close and continuing contact between mind and mind which is the living spirit of all true service, would be to gather together in friendly counsel upon one day in every week, so that each of us in turn might deliver to all the ripe fruit of his meditation; each, of course, as eager to receive as to impart instruction.

"In such an atmosphere—bright with our common hopes, warm with our common feelings, rich with our common thought—there could live no rivalry save that of helpfulness. But, alas, the stern conditions imposed upon us by our profession, preclude the employment of this method of direct governance. One of us must be at the wheel, another on the look-out, others may have been requested to go aloft and reef the fore topsail, the cook may be unable to leave, even for a brief space of time, his duties in the galley.

"For these reasons, the force of which is, I am sure, clear to each of us, it has become necessary for me to devise another method. This I will now lay before you, for your

approval or amendment"—and so on; leading to the adoption of a Ship's Constitution embodying the principles of Representative Republicanism, and separate Constitutions for the starboard and for the port watch, each differing from the others in some important particulars.

Later in the voyage it is decided that the representative system does not interpret with sufficient sensitiveness the changing mood of the ship's company; and the initiative, the referendum, and the recall are set up.

The foregoing travesty of sea-life is clearly grotesque and ridiculous in every particular. If, however, we work back from this comedy, and weigh its elements in the scale of our political practice, candor will compel us to admit that burlesque is turned to sober reality, comedy to tragedy, and that, as a matter of plain fact, the arrangements we sanction on board the Ship of State are even more fantastic than those which fancy has ascribed to the Ship of Commerce.

The first point made was that the captain must always keep in mind the port for which he is sailing. In regard to this his charter is absolutely clear; he is to make Callao, or, it may be, Calcutta.

For what port, then, is the Ship of State bound? So far as the United States is concerned, the Ship's destination is specified, and the objects of the voyage are defined, in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, and in the Preamble to the Constitution. Upon what coast, bounding the vast ocean of life, is this port to be found? Amongst the unnumbered aims of humanity, what are these most cherished objects?

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

In the whole course of man's long and arduous pil-

grimage the far horizon has never glowed with a promise more fair, more nobly emblazoned, more refreshing to the spirit, more urgent of high endeavor, than that which lies in these austere phrases.

But what if these phrases are taken from their shining emplacement upon the distant hills of hope, and are set upon that turbulent ocean of human conflict which beats around their base?

"All men are created equal." Where shall we find this equality? In health? In physical strength? In intelligence? In knowledge? In morals? In benevolence? In desire?

What is the fact? It is that the highest measure of equality among human beings is to be found in the lowest types of savages; and that every step which man has made upward from savagery has made more apparent the terrible inequalities between man and man at the hour of birth.

"All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

What is an unalienable right? It is one which cannot be taken away or given up. Of the three rights specified above, only one is capable of precise definition—Life. Who will support the preposterous statement that Life is not taken away or given up?

Is Liberty unalienable? Where is Liberty defined? It is defined only in the human spirit; and its definitions must, therefore, be as numerous as the inhabitants of the globe. But this view is too broad to serve as the basis of discussion. Let us take a narrower view. Is Liberty embodied in the right of free speech? Is it embodied in the right of dissent? Is it embodied in the right to drink alcohol? Is it embodied in the right to work for a livelihood? Is it embodied in the right of majority rule?

We know that people are punished for speaking freely, that they are punished for drinking alcohol, that they are punished for dissent, that they are prevented by force from working for a livelihood, that they are often ruled by a minority.

Is the right to pursue Happiness unalienable? Where is happiness defined? It is defined in human desire. It assumes innumerable forms, and its essence can best be stated in terms of its opposite. Unhappiness, then, is the



failure to attain the objects of desire. It may have been a sense of the infinite complexity of desire which led the framers of the Declaration of Independence to insert in connection with Happiness, almost the only qualifying phrase which dims the magnificent audacity of that great document. Man is not declared to be endowed by the Creator with the right to Happiness, but only with the right to pursue Happiness.

Is the right to *pursue* Happiness unalienable? May one pursue it along the road of anarchy, of autocracy, of usury, of political corruption? We know that these roads are closed, in theory if not in practice.

"Whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it." If I am convinced that the Government of the United States has destroyed Liberty, has taken away the right to live, has denied me the free pursuit of Happiness, may I advocate the overthrow of the Government in its present form, and the establishment in its place of a Government by soviets, or by a monarch? I may not. May a hundred people, a thousand, a million, ten million? They may not.

When we examine the Preamble to the Constitution we immediately detect beneath its appearance of clarity the same quality of vagueness which characterizes the passage I have quoted from the Declaration of Independence.

A more perfect union is to be formed. What is a more perfect union? Is a union more perfect when its forty-eight constituent parts establish laws of widely differing effect upon questions so fundamental as land-tenure, divorce, inheritance, and labor disputes? Is it more perfect when matters of nation-wide concern—the public health, education, the care of the insane, for instance—are left without any common direction which would serve the common interest. A more perfect union. More perfect than what?

Justice is to be established. What is Justice? Does it lie in the equal administration of the law? It may be withheld by the rules of procedure, and, in criminal cases, it may be thwarted by the abuse of the pardoning power. Does it lie in the equality of economic and social opportunity? What does a theory of equal economic opportunity mean in a practical world of unequal economic units? What does a theory of equal social opportunity mean in a practical

world of unequal social units? Is the spirit of Justice expressed in the maxim "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," or in the injunction to "Temper Justice with Mercy," or in the advice to "Be Just before you are Generous"? Is it to be found in the principle of the closed shop, or in that of the open shop? Does Justice mean that each man shall be protected to the full in his enjoyment of those things which his skill, his industry, his prudence have secured for him, or does it mean that the right to have and to enjoy the fruits of skill, of industry, and of prudence shall be conferred by law upon those who are neither skilful, industrious, nor prudent? Does Justice demand that idleness shall share in the harvest of toil, that extravagance shall spend the savings of thrift, that incompetence shall be endowed with efficiency's estate?

Domestic Tranquillity is to be insured. What is domestic Tranquillity? Is it that state which ensues upon the suppression of public disorder by the power of the executive? Is it that state which, in the dereliction of executive power, ensues upon the declaration of a strike, that state in which the national life is paralyzed, and riot spreads over the land? Is the spirit of Tranquillity to be diffused by maintaining order at the expense of liberty, or by maintaining liberty at the expense of order?

The Common Defence is to be provided for. In what does the Common Defence consist? Does it consist in repelling foreign attack? Does it consist in attacking a foreign Power, on the principle of the offensive-defensive? Is the provision for Common Defence to take the form of universal military training? Is it to take the form of a highly trained, fully equipped, and ever-prepared army? Is it to take the form of contemning military science in the days of safety, as being inconsistent with the spirit of democracy, and, in the day of peril, exalting it as democracy's saviour? Is the Common Defence to be provided for by making the test of patriotism the refusal to prepare for war, and the test of heroism the willingness to go to war unprepared?

The General Welfare is to be promoted. Upon what elements does the General Welfare rest? Does it rest upon the immediate and direct elements of civil order, freedom of contract, the protection of life and property, the give and take of unrestricted competition, the restraints of wise and humane legislation? Does it rest upon the less tangible ele-

ments of intelligence, knowledge, honesty, nobility, guidance, regulation, and discipline? To whatever extent it depends upon the former elements, to what extent can it be promoted if the latter elements are lacking?

The blessings of Liberty are to be secured. Liberty!

In no other name do men so readily fight as in the name of Liberty. There is in human nature a profound and inextinguishable love of the freedom which men instinctively hold to be natural with that nature, and there is required no more than the threat of restriction for this love to emerge ideally in the sentiment of liberty and the will to sacrifice for it all other goods. . . . But though the sentiment of liberty be thus deep and moving, the understanding of it is rare, and its realization is rarer still. 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.'

Thus writes Professor Hartley Burr Alexander in an essay on "Essential Liberty." In another essay, on "Liberty and Democracy," he says:

No one, I think, can comprehend American history without some feeling for the force with which the symbol of liberty appeals to the American mind; but it would be a rash man who should assert that in America, liberty, in any intelligible and definable form, has ever been realized.

Now, I am well aware that to many of my readers the account I have given of the destination of the Ship of State will appear even more fantastic than what I have said about the voyage of the Ship of Commerce.

It will be asked: Has this man no imagination? Can he not see that the passages he has quoted from the Declaration of Independence, and from the Constitution of the United States, are expressions of idealism? Can he not understand that this idealism is placed exactly where he himself said it should be placed, at the helm of the Ship of State? By what blindness is he afflicted that it is not plain to him that the port he is so anxious to find on the chart of government is no other than the attainment of the ideals he has discussed? Why does he not look in the Articles and Amendments of the Constitution for the sailing-directions by which the Ship of State is to be guided in its voyage toward the harbor of attainment?

I propose, in my next article, to undertake this search.

*(To be concluded)*